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ABSTRACT

Aspects of the school environment and interactions in the larger school-community context that affect children's literacy were examined in a school located in a predominantly lower income urban community in the northeast where 97 percent of the students are African American, Jamaican, or Hispanic. Four dimensions of the literacy program were studied: (1) subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge; (2) teaching arrangements and strategies; (3) the learner's development and understanding; and (4) social conditions and issues. Data were collected over a 7-month period from participant observation in strategic planning meetings, school socials, student council elections, significant school-wide assemblies, empirical observations in hallways, meetings and classrooms, and from surveys, inventories, interviews, and staff development workshops. Findings indicate that parents are actively involved with a clearly articulated vision and children's voices are heard in planning meetings, at school assemblies and in student government. School administrators create the social conditions, structures and processes to promote a sense of community and empower people to achieve their full potential. Appendices provide an outline of the writing workshop; a questionnaire for teachers on writing assessment; the Connecticut Mastery Test Rubric for Narrative Writing, Grade 4; and an article entitled "Lack of Vision Makes the Vision Product No Ambition" by Jelani Harper. (Contains 110 references.) (LH)

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Beyond the Ivory Tower: Results of A Series of Reflective and Inquiry-oriented Staff Development Workshops at an Urban Elementary School

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Beyond the Ivory Tower: [redacted]

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Introduction

Reports abound describing the literacy crisis in our country, particularly in urban schools. This paper reports on a small part of a larger ethnographic and qualitative study. With the support of a Vincent T. Coffin Grant, I joined parents, teachers, and administrators in one urban elementary school in investigating literacy contexts and practices there. Working with the staff on that inquiry has given me an insider's perspective. My research question is: What kinds literacy contexts and practices promote improvement of writing? Literacy, as the term is used here, refers to the purposeful, contextual, and empowering use of language, rather than mere mastery of basic skills of reading and writing. Hence, my inquiry investigates aspects of the literacy environment at the school--artifacts, documents, initiatives, activities, and interactions in the larger school-community context that influence children's literate behavior.

The Problem

As is too often the case in urban schools, the scores on many areas of the language arts mastery tests are below the state average. Parents wonder why. Parents know that reading and writing are essential employment skills. They know that people who can read and write can empower themselves. The State Department of Education and the Board of Education want to see the scores increase. They know that a literate and competent work force is key to the productivity in the state. The students' test scores on the statewide mastery tests indicated students don't know how to pre-write, draft, or revise their writing. The holistic scores indicate that many of the children at this school are not elaborating on their ideas. The students' responses, mainly written to prompts, lack some aspect of story grammar--a beginning, middle, or an end. The children are taught "the writing process." They are taught text structures. They write to weekly prompts. There is also evidence that many children can and do write quite well when the stories they write are related to their experience and to literacy events in the classroom. However, the children don't transfer their knowledge to the testing situation. "Why don't the children 'perform well' on the test?" This year, the school community has decided to place the children's abilities at the center of inquiry. We have decided to identify and build on successful contexts and practices, rather than to identify deficiencies. We have decided to identify patterns of strength and need within their children's writing and within their existing program. Hence, a different set of questions drives inquiry: "What literacy contexts and practices promote empowering and effective writing?" Related questions are: "What makes writing good? What makes for a good writing program?"

A conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for the study is that of the Reflective Practitioner (Tabachnich & Zeichner, 1991). Reflective practitioners reflect on interactions between learners and teachers, the milieu, and material and social conditions (Gore, 1987). Reflection enables teachers to take enlightened action--to nurture human potentialities and to uphold democratic principles as the basis for curriculum. Schools operate as learning communities when people can reflect on problems of common interest together. When schools function as learning communities, people learn how to share knowledge and power. Through dialogue and work, they shape the learning and the learning environment (Dilworth, 1992).

Four beliefs organize the research.

(1) Diversity has positive value (Dilworth, 1992). We are interested in literacy events as they are construed by children, parents, teachers, administrators at the school, district, and state level, and the university personnel.

(2) The goal of education is to empower people to achieve their full potential--intellectually, socially, emotionally, and economically (Spring, 1994). We are interested in the context and process of literacy development, not merely the products assessed by the mastery tests.

(3) All educators have the ethical responsibility to believe in the worth and dignity of each individual, and as member of the professions, we are committed to stimulate a spirit of inquiry, to acquire knowledge and understanding, and to formulate life-long learning goals (NEA Code of Ethics, 1975). We strive to create a community of teachers and learners who are committed to growth. Our concern for the welfare of the children unites us in our quest to dignify local knowledge and experience as we strive to improve conditions at the school.

(4) People construct their knowledge and their identities through social interaction in particular situational contexts. Through inquiry, we aim to become aware of both our own literacy practices at the school, to expand our knowledge to include contemporary research in the literacy education of African American and English as a Second Language students, and to set feasible goals for improving our program. If we are to be successful, we must create and maintain culturally-responsive and humane school and classroom environments, not only for our own sake, but also for the sake of the children, parents, and future generations (Bartholome, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

As I proceed in my own inquiry, I reflect on four dimensions of the literacy program at the school. These four dimensions have been identified by inquiry-oriented researchers as significant: subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1989); teaching arrangements and strategies (Brophy, 1990; Gentile, and McMillan, 1990); the learners' development and understanding (Duckworth, 1987; Weaver, 1994); and social conditions and issues of equity and justice in the community and in the classroom (Spring, 1989, 1994).

Context, Access, Participants, Role of the Researcher

The Context

The school is located in a predominantly lower middle-class community in urban city in the northeast. Ninety seven percent of the seven hundred and fifty students enrolled in the school are African American, Jamaican, and Hispanic. Within that general context are other more specific contexts: classrooms, staff development workshops, and strategic planning meetings.

Access

I gained access to the site because I do clinical supervision of student teachers and work with teachers and administrators there. At a staff meeting in the fall, I offered to work with teachers on problems of common interest. I was invited to join the Strategic Planning Team, as a member of the community. Later, I was invited to do a series of five staff development workshops on writing.

The Participants

The participants in this project are the people who are working to create conditions at the school which support academic, personal and community growth. Important participants include the local administrators, teachers, and the community members, and students who work daily to create a school climate and a school culture where networks of support can evolve within the learning community. Important to the research are three administrators, eight teachers, and six students and the parents who attend weekly strategic planning meetings. Participants include those children who are taking on leadership roles within their community, and the children who support them. Important, too, are the participants who organize technology, writing and geography workshops for staff development for and with peers at the school. Participants include several self-selecting teachers who have explicitly invited me into their classrooms to teach beside them so that we can address the needs of the children together.

Fifty faculty and staff were involved in staff development workshops. Of the 26 who responded to a survey on years of experience in teaching: four had taught for 1-5 years; four had taught for 6-10 years; six had taught for 11-15 years; eleven had taught for 16-25 years; one had taught for 26 or more years. Some participants were paraprofessionals others were administrators, and they did not completed the survey of years in teaching.

The Role of the Researcher

Much is written about the literacy crisis in urban schools. My research is unique because it reports on community efforts to raise the level of literacy. Participants in my study have an investment in the project; they want to see the children succeed. The research documents their efforts. It was not my intent, nor is it in the interest of the children, parents, and staff at the school to report on deficiencies. The primary goal of this inquiry was to collect data on literacy contexts and practices that could help participants improve their writing program and the writing at the school. A secondary goal was to provide research-based information on literacy contexts and practices that support the learning of urban, African American,

and English-as-a-second language students. A tertiary goal was to support the teachers in their efforts to engage in meaningful, site-based, reflective staff development.

I am working in the reflective practitioner paradigm for two reasons. Firstly, reflection on practice and reflection in action guides my own learning and teaching. Secondly, the parents, administration, and community after-school programs at this school believe that community-building, self-discipline, and site-based management will lead to solidarity, personal growth, and improved conditions within the school. Reflective teaching and reflective practice can empower teachers to become part of a larger social project, one which connects learning within the classroom and community, and beyond.

Research Methodology

The project structures described in Oja and Smulyan (1989) are being used to conduct the research and analyze the data. In other words, participants contributed to the inquiry. The research agenda evolved as I worked with parents, teachers, and administrators to address community concerns. Successive cycles of planning, acting, observing, reflecting , and revising of the project were based on group goal-setting and feedback. Analysis of data on an on-going basis provided the focus for inquiry.

Ethnographic methods help me to describe the way of life and literacy contexts and practices in the community. Qualitative field research procedures being used in this study are similar to those used in the ethnographic field work of Frake (1962, 1980) and synthesized for reading by Green and Bloome (1983) in their criteria for ethnographic research in educational settings. Conversations, meeting notes, and descriptions of critical events were recorded in field notes and later analyzed using sociolinguistic methods suggested by Hymes (1974). Surveys were conducted, and the data were analyzed by me and by participants. Interviews provided additional background information. The interviews enabled me to reflect perspectives of participants and to assess aspects of the literacy context and practices from their perspective. Data were triangulated to arrive at a more comprehensive and accurate description of the learning experience.

Sources of Data

Data were collected over a period of seven months. A variety of data-collecting procedures were employed--participant-observation, videotaping, collecting of documents, interviewing. Each source of data provided a different perspective on the learning environment and the learning. First, data collected using participant-observation, and ethnographic interview techniques suggested by Spradley (1979) were recorded in field notes. Recorded there were descriptions of the learning environment, observations on the learning process, transcriptions and analyses of videotaped lessons, interviews with teachers and students, and reflections on the final projects. Recorded in the field notes were also notes on learning contexts and practices that support growth.

Data were collected from a variety of sources. School documents, such as newsletters to parents and staff, the handbook, the vision and mission statements, and minutes of meetings were collected. Field notes contained observations, notes from meetings, information on critical events related to literacy

contexts and practices. Surveys, inventories, interviews and evaluations were collected from six staff development workshops on writing. To achieve that goal, data were collected from a variety of sources--from participant-observation in Strategic Planning meetings, at school socials, at Student Council elections and other significant school-wide assemblies, from empirical observations in hallways, meetings, and classrooms, and from surveys, inventories, interviews, and completed tasks at staff development workshops.

This was a cultural study. It was designed to provide information on literacy contexts and practices. It was not intended to provide information on individual contexts or on individual practices. Thus, individuals were not singled out for interviewing or for specific attention. However, many individuals became informants. Administrators' comments helped me to understand literacy contexts and practices at the school. Teachers' comments helped me to understand the literacy contexts and practices in the classroom. Parents' comments at meetings and at socials helped me to understand some limited aspects of literacy contexts and practices in the community. Children's performances in classroom lessons and during school assemblies, including student council elections, helped me to gain insight into literacy contexts and practices in the children's lives.

Since the research questions were articulated in advance, data on literacy contexts and practices in classrooms were collected during observations in classrooms and during large group workshops. Specific data on literacy contexts and practices in classrooms were collected through surveys during staff development workshops. Participants also submitted anonymous evaluation and feedback forms during the workshop sessions. That information gave me yet another perspective on literacy contexts and practices in classrooms. Analysis of samples of student work, by teachers and by me, provided another lens on literacy contexts and practices in the classroom.

Participation in six inquiry-oriented workshops for the fifty members of the staff provided me with an insider's perspective on literacy contexts and practices. Since I facilitated the workshops, I was able to collect data on literacy contexts and practices during the workshop series. Prior to the workshops, I had some knowledge of the curriculum because I supervise student teachers at the site. During each of five two-hour staff development workshops, data on the writing program and on writing practices were collected, analyzed, and interpreted by me and by the staff. The workshops were designed to get individual teachers and this community of teachers to determine what they need to learn, rather than depending on administrators, district-wide coordinators, or on me to make those decisions. At the beginning, middle, and end of that series of workshops teachers described their existing writing program, assessed their knowledge of writing, discussed what makes writing good, and determined a plan for improving the writing program. Since facilitating the workshops, I have been invited to join several teachers in doing classroom-based problem-solving. As a result, I am learning first-hand about the students strengths and needs.

Data Analysis

Multiple contexts were investigated: school-community, school, and classroom, assemblies, conference presentations, and state and district-level meetings.

The first type of analysis focused on interactions during the research process. Data were analyzed using theories from sociolinguists (Hymes, 1974). I used his acronym-- S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G--to attend to setting, participants, events, actions, keys, intonation, norms for interpretation and interaction, and genres. I looked at things like norm-setting, conversational rules, and body language. The strategies drew from sociolinguistics research which suggests that learning is created by both how people act, what they say, and how they say it (Green & Bloome, 1983). Those analyses helped me to arrive at a description of literacy environment as constructed by participants.

The second type of analysis focused on interpretation of data collected at the workshops. Initially, the teachers and I categorized their questions about literacy contexts and practices that support growth using Bloom's Taxonomy (1954). Then I re-analyzed the questions using categories used by people in the field of writing research. The purpose of that analysis was to provide teachers with information that would help them answer their own questions.

The third type of analysis was reflection on survey data and inventories. Teachers assessed their own knowledge of writing programs and practices. I collated the data and gave it back to the teachers to analyze. Through that analysis teachers identified areas of strength and need in the writing program and practices.

The fourth type of analysis was examining children's writing samples. First, the teachers analyzed the samples using a holistic scoring system, then they described what the children could do. A rubric from the Montana State Communications Arts Assessment Tool was provided to help the teachers assess voice, organization and focus, development, word choice, and style with more precision. The teachers noted ways that they would support each child in his or her writing process. Next, I re-analyzed the samples using Gentry's (1991) developmental spelling analysis, Goodman, Goodman and Burke's (1992) outcomes in language arts analysis and Rothstein and Gess's (1987) curriculum framework for teaching developmental writing. My analysis articulated ways to support each writer.

The fifth type of analysis was a description of the writing program and practices. Individual teachers at each grade level described their own program and practices. Then in the final session, they wrote grade level descriptions. My analysis is a reflection on their descriptions and on the research on literacy contexts and practices that support the learning of urban children as they are described in the research.

Discussion of Literacy Contexts and Practices that Empower

What follows is a description and interpretation of data collected from September through mid March, 1995. I describe four aspects of the community and school that promote empowering and effective use of literacy: 1) groups working toward a learning community based on democratic principles; 2) taking action on concerns and identifying common goals; 3) sharing knowledge through dialogue and work; 4) creating social conditions which promote collegiality and an empowering use of literacy.

People in the community are working to create a learning community based on democratic principles. For example, regional and local forums were held throughout the state where participants

discussed how the communities could provide all children in the state with a quality education, equality of opportunities, and necessary services. Several members on a strategic planning team at the school were at one of those forums. They are working at the local level to communicate the goals and to implement the work outlined by the forum participants. The Board of Education's strategic plan calls for site-based management. Funds, training modules, and staff development opportunities are provided to help administrators, teachers and parents implement the strategic plan.

Staffing patterns and administrator behaviors support community involvement. Virtually all of the role models in leadership positions at the school are African American. Visible also in the school are members of local African American, Jamaican and Hispanic communities.

The leadership is committed to the well-being of the children and they are visible in the schools. Delpit (1995) in her most recent research on effective schools for African American children notes that real concern for the children is a prerequisite for effective learning and teaching. For example, the Superintendent of Schools welcomed the teacher to their first Staff Development workshop, charging them to upgrade their knowledge of content and practice to include contemporary information critical thinking, literacy acquisition, and technology. Moreover, he emphasized the importance of conducting research studies at every level of the organization. His support was more than rhetorical. Teachers for two and a half hours every other Thursday for site-based staff development workshops. The principal reinforced the Superintendent words in spirit and in action. She provided teachers with time weekly to meet with her and to discuss curriculum and other concerns. The school social worker not only supported individual teachers and students, but he also taught classroom lessons on self-esteem, writing, and reading, modeling contemporary research-based strategies.

Vision and mission statements, created by the community, support the empowerment of students, positive regard for all members of the community and skill training. Last year administrators, parents, and teachers sat down in a series of meetings and drafted the mission statement and the beliefs for the school. On September 29, 1995, at an open house, the principal, vice principal, parent teacher association president, family resource center coordinator, and members of the school-based management team charged all members of the community to operationalize their school theme, taken from Ladson-Billlings' (1994) recent book, *Dream Keepers: Effective Teachers of African American Children*--"If you can dream it; you can achieve it!" and to address the school mission. The mission of the School is to provide a nationally recognized educational program and staff that develops 21st century citizens who are lifelong learners and independent and critical thinkers who exhibit through their character, personal integrity and values, not only a commitment to their family, community, and nation, but also an ability to meet the challenges of change.

The mission statement is as follows:

We believe that...

- we can teach every child
- every child can learn
- knowledge is power
- student success requires a shared responsibility by students, teachers, and the community
- every child deserves respect
- every child is unique and has a right to be
- children will meet our expectations
- given knowledge and opportunity students can shape their own futures
- the process of schooling must change to be effective in the 21st Century.

Administrators at the school are accessible and they hold high expectations for children. Not only do administrators listen to members of the community, but they also share information on long and short-term goals so that services can be connected to the school mission. They coordinate a complex network of before, during and after-school services --meals, sports, homework clubs, and committee meetings, to name a few. They provide release-time for staff development, and insure that teachers have time to dialogue about critical issues. Two and a half hours of release time each month are provided for staff development workshops. They invite the staff determine the agenda for staff development at regular staff meetings. In a series of case studies of eight exceptional elementary schools described in *Why do some Urban Schools Succeed?* published by Phi Delta Kappa (1980), communication of high expectations and community concern for the children were identified as key factors associated with success in urban elementary schools.

Administrators, teachers, parents and students take action on their concerns. They identify common goals, support one another, communicate their plans, and work together to realize their school's mission and vision. The principal, assistant principal, and social worker also work tirelessly for the children and with the parents. They are highly visible in the hallways, in the classrooms, at Staff Development workshops, and in the after school and evening meetings. The principal also creates a context for growth in literacy in tangible ways. This year, she instituted a school-wide sustained silent reading time. During that time, all children and adults read books of their own choosing. Sanacore (1990) makes the point that such structures within the school day can establish a foundation for a lifetime reading habit. It is well documented that students who read, write more and better.

Morrow and Paratore (1993) stress the value of involving parents in their children's literacy development. Home-school partnerships become even more valuable in communities where the cultural and linguistic experiences of children in the community and home may be different from those at the school. Administrators work tirelessly to provide parents and teachers with information that will boost their involvement in school activities. In an effort to form a bridge between the school and the community, the

principal and social worker put together packets for parents, teachers, and community members. Topics include establishing effective communication between home and school, creating a home that encourages learning, defining ten steps to self-esteem, building a child's confidence and feelings of self worth, encouraging phrases for helping children increase their sense of self-esteem and well-being, and learning-together activities for parents and teachers. The poem, "I Take Responsibility," by Ina J. Hughs, sums up the philosophy which provides the context and practice of their leadership and their high expectations for all members of the school community.

I take responsibility for children
who sneak popsicles before supper,
who erase holes in math workbooks,
who can never find their shoes.
I take responsibility for those
who stare at photographers from behind barbed wire,
who can't bound down the street in a new pair of sneakers.
who never "counted potatoes,"
who are born in places we wouldn't be caught dead.
who never go to the circus,
who live in an X-rated world.
I take responsibility for children
who bring us sticky kisses and fistfuls of dandelions,
who hug us in a hurry and forget their lunch money.
And I take responsibility for those
who never get dessert,
who have no safe blanket to drag behind them,
who can't find any bread to steal,
who don't have any rooms to clean up,
whose pictures aren't on any body's dresser,
whose monsters are real.
I take responsibility for children
who spend all their allowance before Tuesday,
who throw tantrums in the grocery store and
pick at their food,
who like ghost stories,
who shove dirty clothes under the bed, and never
rinse out the tub,
who get visits from the tooth fairy,
who don't like to be kissed in front of the carpool,
who squirm in church or temple and scream in the phone,
whose tears we sometimes laugh at and whose
smiles can make us cry.
I take responsibility for those
whose nightmares come in the daytime,
who will eat anything,
who have never seen a dentist,
who aren't spoiled by anybody,
who got to bed hungry and cry themselves to sleep,
who live and move, but have no being.
I take responsibility for children who want to be carried
and for those who must,
for those we never give up on and for those
who don't get a second chance.
For those we smother.... and for those who grab
the hand of anybody kind enough to offer it.

I offer my hand to all
so that no child is left behind
because we did not act.

Many groups within the community have joined forces to assume responsibility for the care of the children. This section of the paper describes their work. The school operates a family resource center from the school. People from the school and from the local university community have combined resources to provide health care and information to parents within the community. Two local community groups-- one from a university and one-from a local, grant-funded agency provide after school instruction. Since money for transportation is scarce, representatives of the library, the arts, the historical commission, and other organizations come to the school to sponsor programs. Parks (1994) offers a number of suggestions for developing and nurturing the interests and abilities of minority children, particularly African American children. Many of her suggestions are operating within this community. For example, nutrition, self-concept building, cultural awareness, and parent and community involvement not only exist at the school, but they form a firm foundation for promoting effective and empowering use of literacy.

Administrators, faculty and parents share knowledge and power through work and dialogue on problems of common interest. Members of the school and the community are working to improve the administration and the curriculum at the school. For example, the school has a site-based managed "Strategic-Planning Team." This team, run by parents, teachers, and school administrators, meets weekly. Students also participate on the Design Team. The Strategic Planning Team receives support and training in site-based management from a Regional Applied Research Laboratory-- one of ten nonprofit organizations funded by the United States Department of Education. The Team at this school meets every Thursday, and they meet with a Team from a nearby school on some weekends to discuss their successes at moving toward self-governance. The Team members act as "critical friends," supporting local initiatives and sharing expertise. In this way, students, parents, teachers, interested members of the community, and administrators learn how to manage a school together. The recent U.S. Department of Education Conference, "Building Community Partnerships for Learning," held in Worcester, MA (March 17-18, 1995) provided members of the Strategic Planning Team with an opportunity to speak publicly about some of the contextual and curricular changes they are making at their school. Members of the school community are using literacy in empowering and meaningful ways to improve conditions at the local level.

One of the first initiatives of the Strategic Planning Team this year was to respond to student requests for a student government. The parents and teachers wanted to hear and recognize the student's concerns. They immediately worked to implement a plan for establishing the student council. Children's welfare and democratic process is the curriculum operating here. When parents and community members behave responsibly toward children, children learn responsibility. The next section describes how the children used their academic skills and their knowledge of politics to construct a context for growth within the community.

The student council elections gave students a chance to assume leadership roles and to practice public speaking. They gave the students an opportunity to use literacy skills to participate in the democratic process. Student council speeches highlight some of the concerns of the students at the school. (Pseudonyms are used throughout this paper.)

> Good Morning. My name is Shanta Green. I am twelve years old. I am in the sixth grade. My hobbies are bowling, roller skating, volleyball, and singing. If I am elected President of the Student Council, I would help clean the bathroom and keep order in the cafeteria. I would also sponsor educational events such as math clubs, science clubs, and the such. I would also sponsor Funday, dances, parties, and an Easter Egg hunt in April. I am sure that some of the candidates will make promises that are impossible to keep, but if I am President, I would keep my promises. Of course, I would need your help to make these happen so vote for Shanta Green, and you will not regret your vote.

> Hi, my name is Tayarisha Smith. I am eleven and a half years old. I am in the sixth grade. My teacher's name is Mrs. Emily James. I would like to tell you why I should become Vice President of the School. I would try to make this school a better place to learn. I will try to keep our bathrooms clean and open. If students don't want to eat the lunch that is served, I'll try to get a store open at lunch time that serves juices and things. We need to make money to go on trips. We should have fund-raisers such as bake sales, and dances. We need more programs for boys and girls. We should have basketball, Double Dutch, and cheer leading. We need more school supplies such as paper, staplers, erasers, and that is why we need fund-raisers. We should do special things for the kindergartners, such as take them on trips so they won't feel left out. For the big kids, we should make money for trips and school supplies and the other things we need. I'll try to have special things for teachers so they won't feel left out either. I hope that you make the right choice and vote for me. Thank you for your cooperation!

> Good Morning. My name is Lenore Brown. I am in the sixth grade. I feel that I am qualified for the position of treasurer because I am a dependable and responsible person. I have been doing well in math and I am good at keeping track of money. As treasurer I would meet with the President about different fund-raising ideas to be used for field trips such as museums and plays. I would also like to create and bring back some other after-school programs such as the Homework Club, the Drill Team and the Double Dutch Team. A Homework Club would have teachers help us in areas we find difficult. A Drill Team and Double Dutch team would help us learn organization and cooperation skills. If I am elected treasurer, I will work hard to make our school a better place.

These articulate students want to work to improve the quality of life at the school. They want the bathrooms unlocked so that students can have free access to them throughout the day. They want the library be open all day so that they can read freely and do research. They want to earn money for activities, school supplies, and field trips. They want more after school sports so that they can learn cooperation and more academic clubs so that they can extend their learning. There is greater likelihood that the students' requests will be honored now that there is a student council. The elections and the student council organization enable students to use their literacy and discourse skills in meaningful and empowering ways.

Teachers, like parents, serve as children's models and their brokers. The following section of the paper traces the development of a series of staff development workshops. The workshop series was , in part, designed to stimulate interest in reviewing contemporary research on literacy acquisition and development. In an effort to tailor the workshop to meet the school's needs, a small group of teachers brainstormed what they knew about writing before and after viewing a video on writing. Ogle's (1984) K-

W-L form was used to organize data. The following graphic organizer summarizes the data that were collected at the first workshop.

What do I know about writing?	What do I want to learn about writing?	What did I learn about writing?
1. Writing can help people process what they hear and read.	How can writing be used to motivate learning?	There are many different forms of writing that we can celebrate with children: recipes, poems, fiction, informational pieces, and personal writing.
2. We write to convey messages.	How do you teach skills to provide the right / write environment?	Environment is important in that students need to feel valued as real writers.
	How can we help children write informational pieces and thoughtful essays?	
3. We write to paint a picture with words.	How to get my students to paint a picture with words?	Will sharing ideas and experiences help children write better descriptions?
	How do I get kids to enhance stories with a little background?	Children have their own ideas for writing.
4. When writing we must start very basic, using prompts.	How to get interesting prompts that kids get excited about writing. It has to be the same since we have to do this from the CMS.	We need to have purposes to write.
	How can we teach the prompt format and still give the children choice?	
	Can we give children a choice of prompts?	
	Do we have to use prompts? Is there another way to get children writing?	
	How can kids get their own ideas for prompts?	
5 Writing is individual.	How can I motivate students to write?	Having a predictable time for writing encourages children to write more.
	How can we get to know about children's interests?	
6. Editors need to be positive and constructive.	Teachers express approval so that the student will focus in on their ideas.	Teacher becomes connected by writing in her own journal.
	How do we develop social skills to work cooperatively.	I'm ready to move onto a writing group arrangement where students critique each other's writing. How do I do that?
	What do I do with other students when I am conferencing?	I need to make writing folders accessible to students.
	How can I learn about all of the new information about writing?	As teacher we need to be very aware of what is out there.

The teachers at the workshop had a lot of questions about writing, and I had some questions about the literacy practices at the school. It was clear from discussions at that first workshop that the children wrote weekly and that they kept their writing in folders. The teachers were required to have students write to a prompt every week and then to holistically score the writing sample using a three point rubric. For the most part, primary-level teachers in this group used a skills-based approach to writing. Intermediate-level teachers strove to integrate writing into the overall curriculum. Since my training in writing utilized Graves, (1983), Calkins (1986), and Atwell (1987, 1990, 1991), I had never used"writing prompts" to improve writing or "a rubric" to evaluate writing. One of the teachers from the school, who was trained in holistic scoring using the rubric and who was effective at constructing meaningful prompts led the second

half of the workshop. In their evaluation of the first session, the teachers noted that they wanted to engage in a writing workshop themselves, then they wanted to learn more about how to do writing workshop with their students.

The strategic plan of the district called for site-based management of staff development that was defined by and geared to the interests and needs of the teachers. Hence, an aim of the workshops was to promote a long-term interest in site-based inquiry, to provide resources and training in literacy education. The idea of engaging in sustained inquiry into literacy contexts and practices evolved from dialogue with the teachers and administrators. They wanted to learn how to assess and improve their students' writing. Two months later, the faculty and staff asked me to coordinate and facilitate a series of workshops on writing with and for them. The agenda for the series of the four staff development workshops that followed were:

1) identifying questions and articulating goals and desired outcomes,

2) assessing background knowledge and interests with regards to reading and writing and reflecting on data from self-assessments,

3) assessing student writing and discussing ways to improve student writing,

4) describing existing program and practices and suggesting ways of improving it.

The following section of the paper summarizes key findings from those workshops.

Identifying questions for inquiry/ Articulating goals and desired outcomes

A total of forty teachers, staff, and administrators attended the second staff development workshop. In that session, each teacher completed an interview protocol, identified their questions, and set goals for the workshop series. Interview data from forty teachers indicated that sixty-five percent of the faculty and staff members enjoyed writing. Most staff members write for a variety of purposes every day. The majority write for personal reasons-- to remember to do chores, to correspond with friends, to respond to student work, to keep records. Some of the writing is task-related-- teaching children to form letters, write their stories on experience charts, creating lesson plans, writing advertisements and notices to parents. Fifty percent the faculty and staff who responded to the interview wrote that they would feel successful if at the end of the four two-hour sessions, they could improve their student's confidence in writing and their students' technical writing skills.

Interviews and feedback on the evaluations of workshop sessions indicated that most staff development in the past focused on improving technical skills related to teaching of reading or writing. Hence, they feel pressure to upgrade their knowledge of techniques. In the first session, the teachers brainstormed some questions that they wanted to address. In that session they categorized their questions using Bloom's Taxonomy and found that most of their questions had to do with application (23), comprehension (3), and recall (6), a few had to do with analysis (6), synthesis (1), and evaluation (7) of writing. Their overall goal was to improve their writing and to help their students improve their writing..(See figure 1, p. 16).

Ivory Tower

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first session and in all subsequent sessions the teachers participated in workshop. They had time to do freewrites and then to write on a shared theme--oving the writing program and practices at the school. Each participant wrote a description of the writing program in their classroom, described the strengths of their program and practices as evidenced in student performances, and articulated next steps in improving their program and practices. They shared their work in progress during peer conferences and then revised their draft of the paper.

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What do I have to know about the existing curriculum?
What are the writing standards?
What can I do to improve the writing program?
How can I improve my own writing?
What skills should I know?
What do I need to do to become a better writer?
How do we become successful writers?
What processes and skills are needed to become better writers?
How can I strengthen my student's writing program?
What is connection between reading, listening, writing, spelling?
Should we integrate writing and reading?
Are good readers also good writers?
Why do so many children/people dislike writing?
How do I make students feel more comfortable about their writing?
Getting Started
How often should our students write?
How do I motivate my students to write?
How can we make the transition from talking to writing?
What should be taught first, the structure of prose or creative writing?
What forms of writing will help kids function well in society and in school?
Topic selection
How can I get students to stay on topic?***
Should all students be required to write on the same topic?
Drafting
How can we help students elaborate?
How do I get my students to stay on topic and to elaborate on their stories?
How can I get my students to expand their writing?
How can I get my students to support main ideas with details?
How can I get my students to add more detail to their sentences?
How can I get my students to sequence their stories?
How can we help our students to see similarities of their works and those of the authors they are reading?
Revising writing
Coaching
How do we coach students?
How do we get them to coach each other?
How do we challenge students to improve their writing without criticizing them?
Minilessons
How do I effectively transition my students from the early stages of writing to become increasingly literate?
How can I teach grammar?
Editing
How can we help students edit?**
Can we accept the writing of our students, if the grammar is not correct, considering the fact that generally grammar is not a strength in many homes? Communication is possible, but grammar and writing are not stressed!
How can we get children to proofread what they write?
Publishing and Sharing
How do we help students feel more secure with their writing so that they will feel comfortable sharing?
Assessment and Evaluation
What makes writing good?
Is there a consensus about what is good writing?
Does personal taste play a role in our evaluation of writing?
What are the overall expectations for each grade level's maximum and minimum writing?
Should we stress evaluation early on in the writing process?
How do we consistently evaluate writing?
Issues of Transfer in Literacy Education
Do we encourage writing in other areas other than just literature?
How can we get students to write across disciplines!
How do you get students to transfer skills from daily work, to daily life, to testing situations?
How can I help my students see that a story has a beginning, middle, and end.
Questions from the first Writing Workshop
Mary Rearick--University of Hartford

Figure 1. Questions organized according to contemporary categories in the literature on writing (Graves, 1983).

Assessing teacher knowledge and experience

The third workshop session was designed to provide teachers with data that could help them reflect further on their writing program and practices. Much has been written about the value of teacher reflectivity. Teacher reflectivity generally falls into three categories: technical, interpretive, and critical (Gore, 1987). The technical approach, represented by the work of Cruikshank (1985) emphasizes reflection on the relationship between teaching techniques and performances across contexts. Most of the initial questions posed by the teachers dealt with that level of reflectivity.

I devised a writing inventory form to help the teachers assess their knowledge of writing (Rearick, 1995). The format for the writing assessment was adapted from a form that I found at the Coalition of Essential Schools Conference in Chicago, on November 6, 1994. The information on the form itself was gleaned from Sabranek, & Kemper's (1990), *Writers Inc.* (See Appendix A.) Data from surveys and inventories were compiled and analyzed by the teachers.

The table below summarizes the key findings:

I. What features of the writing process were you taught (audience, genre of essays, searching a topic, shaping a subject, ?		
In college 48%	In my first year 7%	Currently 34%
II. Did your teachers motivate with movies, art, literature, free writing...?		
In college 31%	In my first year 8%	Currently 46%
III. Which forms did you write? essays, literary genres, research, summaries, poetry, reading logs, news stories, business letters?		
In college 30%	In my first year 5%	Currently 40%
IV. Did you ever participate in any of these activities (grammar exercises, outlines, rewrites based on teacher comments, rewrites based on peer comments, collaborative workshops) when the purpose was to write?		
In college 48%	In my first year 6%	Currently 24%
V. Do you ever have your students participate in any of these activities (grammar exercises, outlines, rewrites based on teacher comments, rewrites based on peer comments, collaborative workshops) when the purpose was to write?		
In college 2%	In my first year 3%	Currently 41%

Figure 2. Interview Data from teachers and staff.

The findings from that assessment revealed that the writing process was explicitly taught in the undergraduate courses of nearly forty-eight percent of these teachers. Few teachers studied or taught the writing process in their first year of teaching. Most of the same teachers who learned the writing process in college continue to study and teach it today. Few remember participating in peer conferences or collaborative writing. Few teachers conduct peer conferences or model collaborative writing for their

students. Within the past five years, with the renewed focus on writing, about half of the teachers on the faculty have started teaching writing and bolstering their knowledge of effective literacy contexts and practices. Few teachers remember being externally motivated to read, but many motivate their children using art, movies, prompts, and pictures. Few use literature. Most of the teachers remember writing essays, summaries, and research papers in college. Few remember learning the features of literary genres, writing business letters, or reading logs. Forty-eight percent of the teachers completed grammar exercises, outlines, and revised papers based on teacher comments in college and they use these activities currently in their classrooms.

In the second session, teachers were also asked to read, respond to, and discuss a short story which focused on the significance of stories in people's lives and an article on writing as meaning making. Those articles were distributed at the end of the previous session. Only a few teachers took the time to read the articles, and the majority of the teachers felt that it was unreasonable of me to request that they do homework as part of staff development. I was surprised by their reaction, so I explained that my intent was to demonstrate the relationship between reading and writing. Instead we returned to writing revisions of their descriptions of their writing program, successful practices, and next steps.

Reflectivity can potentially lead to problem-solving when it is coupled with an action plan (Zeichner, 1989). Teachers noted that they wanted to learn more about how others were using children's literature to teach writing. For many years, they were required to use a basal reading series as part of their reading instruction. Until recently, the basal reading series had been skills-based, but the district is moving toward literature-based approaches. Now they want to upgrade their knowledge and use of literature to teach literacy skills. Feedback from that second workshop indicated that the teachers wanted resources, materials, and source books that would help them to improve the writing program. The majority of teachers wanted to focus only on analyzing the children's writing and learning new techniques for improving it, rather than focusing on their own writing.

There were external factors that influenced the teachers' morale in this session. It had been announced in the newspaper that morning that salaries would be frozen in the following year and that beginning salaries would be rolled back. Some of the staff members were asked to keep detailed time-on-task cards, explaining how they spend their time at the school. It was not the best day to do a staff development workshop.

Assessing student writing and teaching practices

In the third session I presented a show and tell presentation of resources that could be used in writing, critical thinking, and children's literature. The presentation was videotaped. I shared some recent research on literature and literacy connections, on the relationship between home and school literacy, and on qualities of effective writing (Coles & Vorpat, 1985). I provided teachers with a detailed written description of reading and writing workshops. Examples of student story maps, readers' logs, and writing were displayed. Information on thematic unit planning and on reading and writing workshops was summarized in

a handout and on graphic organizers. Books on those subjects were displayed. Some teachers signed out and borrowed books.

The teachers took time to peruse the materials while they took a food break, then they asked me if I would model lessons geared toward each grade level, using the methods described in the books. I suggested that I would be willing to come into their classrooms and work alongside them and with their students, and then we could select the methods that would be most appropriate for the students and for their curriculum. Since the final workshop in March, I have worked alongside five teachers and I have done some lessons in classrooms that model some of the strategies suggested in the books.

After the presentation, the teachers met in grade level teams to assess qualities in samples of their students' work. Their assessments of student work were summarized on graphic organizers. They had little difficulty scoring the work, but had some difficulty describing what the child could do well. Many teachers knew that a story had to have a beginning, a middle and an end, characterization, a plot, and a problem and solution, but they did not know how to move ahead in discussions of the work. Although the teachers talked about methods they used to help their students write more, they did not write much on the graphic -organizers. I offered to re-analyze the writing samples myself, using some developmental analyses by Gentry, Goodman, Goodman, and Burke, and Rothstein and Gess. The information would be added to their own analyses and recommendations and would be distributed at the following session (See Appendix B for a sample).

At the end of the session, the teachers noted that they found the presentation and activities beneficial. It makes sense that they would enjoy talking about their students' work and their own teaching and learning. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) encourage teachers to clarify personal meaning by examining taken-for-granted habitual patterns of curriculum planning. By reflecting on personal experiences as a source of insight and sharing stories, teachers can clarify their existing, often tacit knowledge and beliefs.

In the feedback from that session, teachers requested additional time in the next session to reflect on children's writing samples and to compare stories and strategies across grade levels. They felt those activities enabled them to clarify and reflect on their existing program and practices. They realized that many of their existing programs were skills-focused, and that contemporary research supported a more process-oriented approach to teaching reading and writing (Dahl & Freppon, 1995, Putnam, 1994). They wanted more information on how teachers in process-oriented classrooms organized the learning environment and the learning. Sharing of stories can either reinforce the status quo or help people become more critical learners. The teachers used the knowledge from sharing stories as a springboard for finding out about alternative programs and practices. I offered to bring a video on writing by Lucy Calkins to the final session.

Describing the program and practices

In the final session, the teachers watched Lucy Calkins' video, "Writing Workshop: A World of Difference." The teachers wrote in the evaluation that the video provided them with many ideas for

improving their own teaching of writing. Then the teachers received the writing samples, the analyses and the recommendations from the previous staff development workshop. They met in grade level teams, reflected on the data, then proceeded to analyze more samples of student work.

By the end of the fifth session, several teachers were motivated to borrow books from me, to enroll in writing courses, and to make arrangements for me to come into their classrooms. Beyer (1991) notes that when teachers confront their silence around issues that concern them and their students, they often decide to change structures and practices which may have worked in the past but do not work well any more. The teachers in this group do want to improve the way they teach reading and writing, and some of the changes may require changes in curriculum, tasks, and use of time. As the teachers discussed the qualities of their students' writing, they began to recognize patterns of growth from one grade level to the next and patterns of strength in the children's writing. They discovered why very different narratives were examples of strong writing. They discovered that their students were writing in various genres.

At the end of the session, teachers in grades K, 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 submitted a written description of their writing program and practices, then they generated one or two steps they wanted to take as a team to improve literacy contexts and practices in their grade level. (See Appendix C for a summary.)

The teachers described the strength of their program and practices. It is evident from the analysis that the teachers provide students with opportunities for language experience, drawing, reading, book making, reading their own stories, writing about what is being read, discussing story structure, and conferring with one another on thier writing. In addition they realize the value of using literature as a launch pad for literacy. Many teachers use strategies like brainstorming, webbing, minilessons, discussions, graphic organizers, and modeling and instruction, to teach the children how to comprehend texts and organize their writing. By sixth grade the students are writing essays, reports, conducting research, and engaging in peer-editing conferences.

The teachers established the following as "next steps" in improving the writing program and practices at the school:

- get parents involved
- read more stories
- designate a time every day for writing
- develop a writing program based on the process writing approach
- analyze more student work in grade-level teams
- take time at staff development meetings to discuss effective strategies and to share ideas
- bring in a writing consultant to work with grade-level teachers and students to improve the overall program.

Conclusion

> The commitment of the teachers with whom I worked gives me hope as a teacher educator who is committed to helping new teachers reflect carefully about what it mean to teach toward personal empowerment and liberation.... One of the most tangible vehicles for these dreams has been education--even when it was substandard and alienating. African Americans believed that somehow education could make their dreams a reality. *I too believe and hope that if we can dream it, we can surely do it* (Ladson-Billings. (1994)*The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* , p. 143).

Occasionally in life one has an opportunity to become a part of a vision that is truly enriching. That statement sums up my feelings about the efforts of the children, parents, faculty and staff to improve the programs and practices at this urban elementary. Moving between the meetings, the conferences, the classrooms, and the conversations, one really does have the sense that this entire community heeds the poster outside of the principal's door--"It takes a whole village to raise a child." One gets a sense of the community as one enters the unlocked doors of this modern school building when one sees a sign advertising a religious event in the auditorium, children involved in after school sports, the reading and homework clubs, staffed by university students and students from local secondary schools who do community service in those programs. One gets a sense of community when one attends Site-based Management Team Meetings and receives a copy of the agenda and the minutes and an invitation to participate, even as an observer. One gets a sense of community when one is invited to participate in the staff development initiatives, to help out on inclusion projects, to come into the classroom and look at the children's work and to join in on the teaching. One gets a sense of community when one walks by the door of the kindergarten classroom where the teacher is playing a guitar and children from the special education classroom wheel and walk their way into the classroom to join in on the singing each morning. One gets a sense of community when one is invited to breakfasts, potlucks, student council elections, special events like science fairs and plays and other school events. Frank Smith writes that one of our goals as educators is to invite children to join the literacy club by reading and writing with them regularly. Donald Graves (1983) suggests that when teachers and students write regularly together, both writing and teaching improve.

My year long ethnographic study documents several aspects of the context and practices at the school support growth. First, the parents and staff have a clearly articulated vision. That vision appears on bulletin boards, in parent and staff handbooks, on posters, and in the daily interactions of key people in the school community. Second, parents are actively involved in the school. Parents are visible in strategic planning meetings, in paraprofessional roles, and at socials and assemblies at the school. Children's voices are heard, not just at recess, but at the planning meetings, at school assemblies, and in student government. Parents and teachers who advocated for the student government create opportunities for the students to practice literacy skills to problem-solve situations within their community. Third, administrators create the social conditions, structures, and processes which promote a sense of collegial community. Contexts

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which empower people to achieve their full potential--intellectually, socially, emotionally, and economically certainly promote improvement of literacy. (Spring, 1994)

The school where I am conducting research is unique; it does not fit the stereotype of urban schools that I so often read about in my education journals. My experience here school suggests that changes are taking place that will enable children and teachers to view and to use literacy in ever more meaningful and empowering ways. If we educators are smart, we will stick to the knitting. We will create community and school contexts where parents, teachers and students can participate in the democratic process. We will work in collegial ways across institutions, sharing visions of hope, responsibility, and joy. We will listen to the parents who ask us to care for their children. Delpit (1995) identifies caring teachers as one of the factors which contributes to the quality of the education and the experience of African American children, and my research confirms this. We will listen to the teachers when they ask us to join them in working with their students, in finding their strengths and in working with them when they are struggling with their reading and writing and in revising their programs. We will listen to the children when they ask to have the bathrooms unlocked and the library opened so that they can use them freely throughout the day, and we will provide them with after school clubs and cooperative sports.

Administrators, teachers, and members of the community work together to understand the local, situational context, then they strive to identify strengths and goals for improving both the literacy contexts and practices in classrooms. They strive to create more humane and culturally-responsive learning environments. The key to empowering students through literacy is modeling empowering use of literacy within the school community. In the school community, and particularly in the classroom, students learn the power and the pleasure of writing (Atwell, 1986, 90,91; Calkins, 1986, Graves, 1983).

My next step is to work side-by-side teachers in their classrooms. Their descriptions of the classrooms indicate that many good things are happening there, yet the descriptions of "next steps" indicate that some teachers would like support-- parental support, resources, and additional training while other teachers want to develop their own writing program. It would be interesting to do research with a grade-level team that plans its own program and then to do research with a team that works with a consultant.

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Writing Workshop: A World of Difference

Mary Rearick, University of Hartford

Introductions

In this roundtable, I will share with you some of the strategies that I developed while working with fifty-eight teachers in an urban elementary school. The simulation exercises will help you to experience an inquiry-oriented approach to staff development.

Complete the card and introduce yourselves to one another by sharing information about your favorite author, the latest book you have read, your favorite genre of writing and your latest writing.

FAVORITE AUTHOR	LATEST BOOK/ SELECTION READ
NAME	
FAVORITE KIND OF WRITING	LATEST WRITING

What did you learn about your colleague by sharing that information?

Welcome!

Session 1

Fifty-eight teachers, administrators, and staff people at one urban elementary are changing the way they do staff development. They are doing more site-based planning. The workshop was designed to achieve five objectives. The teachers wanted...

1. To learn about themselves as writers
2. To assess the school writing program
3. To assess students' writing.
4. To become familiar with the latest research on writing
5. To plan next steps for improving the writing program

Lucy Calkins says, "When we share writing, we uncover and share who we are. Writing invites us to put ourselves on the line, to bring ourselves into classrooms, into the teaching and learning transaction. Effective methods of teaching writing and reading are transparent. What shines through in classrooms where reading and writing are an integral part of the natural learning context are the voices of children, speaking in voices which are startlingly honest."

Complete the K-W-L Sheet.

K-W-L

What do you know about writing?	What do we want or need to learn about writing?	What did we learn about writing?

Session 2
Join me in thinking about how we can improve writing in our programs.

Introductory Activity

1. How many of you like writing?
2. How many of you write every day?
3. What kinds of writing do you do?
4. Complete this stem..."I would feel successful if at the end of a series of workshops on writing, if I.....
5. What would you like to do during the workshops?

Meta: What did you learn from that activity?

Identifying questions:

1. Write down one question you have about writing.
2. Compare your question with a neighbor.
3. What kinds of questions do we have?

Meta: What did you learn from that activity?

Assessing our knowledge and experience:

Write down one thing that you already know about teaching writing.

Write a letter to your boss.

1. Describe the way you currently teach writing in your classroom.
2. Describe how you structure the environment for writing.
3. Describe the kinds of instruction and modeling you provide.
4. Explain how you teach writing in your classroom.

Assessing interests

Let's learn a little more about your backgrounds and interests so that we can tailor the inservice days to your experience and knowledge.

Complete the Writing Assessment.
Complete the Interest Inventory

Meta: What did we learn from this activity?

Session 3

Write about where you came from.
Answer the question: What do I bring with me today?

Go around the circle and do introductions.
Share written responses to the prompt and the question.

Go Meta: Process the activity.

Review last week's workshop activities.
1:30-1:40 **Introductory Activity**
Name our concerns.
1:45 **Identifying our questions:**
Share the findings from the survey.
2:00 **Assessing our knowledge and experience**
Share the findings from the survey.
2:15 **Assessing interests**
Share the findings from the survey.
2:30 **Identifying our strengths**
Share the findings from the survey.
3:00 **Goal-setting and Strategic Planning**

Go Meta: What is the value of this activity?

Discuss what is good and what's not working in your writing program.

Go Meta: What is the value of this activity?

Get together in Literature Circles.
Discuss the stories you read.
Discuss the stories you wrote.

Session 4: Analyzing student work
Identifying strengths:

In Grade Level Groups analyze the samples of writing.
1. What can the low level students do?
2. What can the middle level students do?
3. What can the high level students do?

Use the graphic organizers to help guide your discussion, if you wish.

What makes this writing good?	What comments do I have on the piece?

Go Meta: What is the value of this activity?

Use the holistic scoring rubrics to score and describe each piece of writing, then develop recommendations for instruction.

Paper #_____

Grade Level_____

Holistic Score_____

	Description of What the Student Can Do	Recommendations for Instruction

Go meta: What is the value of this activity?

Description of how our writing program supports literacy:

1.

2.

3.

Description of strategies that help students improve their writing
1. 2. 3.
Description of one way that we might improve the writing program and the writing.
1.

Share these findings with the whole group.

Goal-setting and Strategic Planning

Revise your letter to your boss,

1. Explain what your children can do well.
2. Explain how you would like to improve your program.
3. Make up a wish list of resources and educational experiences that would help you to achieve your goal.

How Does My Writing Assessment Measure Up?

Name Rearick **Grade** 38 respondents--K-6

The purpose of this questionnaire is to get participants to look at their writing assessment practices over time. How has your knowledge of writing assessment and grading style changed?

Directions: Indicate by a check mark any of the features of the writing process that you were taught.

	as a student	as a first year teacher	currently in my classroom	not familiar with the terms
1. Awareness of audience	12	6	8	10
2. Characteristics of forms of writing:				
Personal	23	5	12	
Functional	26	4	14	
Narrative	22	4	13	1
Expository	19	4	13	1
Persuasive	21	2	10	1
3. Guidelines for selecting a topic	20	2	13	3
4. Guidelines for searching and shaping a subject	21	1	12	1
5. Guidelines for organizing ideas	24	3	13	
6. Mechanics	27	5	15	
7. Sentence combining	26	2	5	
8. Writing with style	18		6	4
9. Peer conferences	9	3	16	5
10. Revision	21	7	17	4
Did your teachers or did you use any of the following to motivate students to write?				
11. Movies/ Television	5	2	11	2
12. Art/ Music	9	6	16	1
13. Ungraded free writing	13	2	15	1
14. Literature	16	1	15	1
15. Small/ Whole group discussions	13	3	21	
16. Field trips	15	3	25	1
17. Current events	14	1	22	1
18. Guest speakers	13		18	2
19. Lecture	14	2	16	2
20. Assigning prompts	9	7	22	2
In which of the following forms do your students write?				
21. Writing essays	15	3	14	1
22. Writing in literary genres	7	1	4	2
23. Writing research process	14	3	15	1
24. Writing a summary	15	1	16	
25. Writing poetry	12	5	32	
26. Writing a short story	12	2	22	
27. Writing a news story	13	3	14	
28. Writing about literature	10	4	10	
29. Response journal/ log	8	4	15	1
30. Writing a business letter	10	4	11	1

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How Does My Writing Assessment Measure Up?

Name_____ **Grade**_____

The purpose of this questionnaire is to get participants to look at their writing assessment practices over time. How has your knowledge of writing assessment and grading style changed?

Directions: Indicate by a check mark any of the features of the writing process that you were taught.

	as a student	as a first year teacher	currently in my classroom	not familiar with the terms
Did you ever participate in any of the following activities when the main purpose was to learn how to write?				
31. Completing grammar exercises	25	4	8	
32. Writing outlines	26	3	9	2
34. Learn proofreading symbols	17	1	13	1
35. Rewrite based on a teacher's comments	23	3	12	2
36. Rewrite based on peer comments	10	1	9	2
37. Reading models prior to writing	17	2	9	
38. Participating in collaborative writing	10	2	8	3
Did you ever have your students participate in any of the following activities when the main purpose was to learn how to write?				
39. Completing grammar exercises	10	2	19	1
40. Writing outlines	13	1	15	
41. Teach how to use proofreading symbols	4	2	12	
42. Rewrite based on your comments	11	2	21	
43. Rewrite based on peer comments	4		7	1
44. Reading models prior to writing	5		12	1
45. Participating in collaborative writing	2	2	14	1

CONNECTICUT MASTERY TEST
RUBRIC FOR NARRATIVE WRITING
1993 Grade 4

Score Point: 6

Well-developed narratives; writers expand on all key events and characters
- fully elaborated with specific details
- strong organizational strategy/sequencing
- fluent

Score Point: 5

Developed narratives; writers expand on most key events and characters
- moderately well-elaborated with mostly specific details
- generally strong organizational strategy/sequencing
- moderately fluent

Score Point: 4

Somewhat-developed narratives; some expansion of key events and characters
- adequately elaborated with mix of general and specific details
- satisfactory organizational strategy/sequencing
- somewhat fluent

Score Point: 3

Minimally-developed narratives; little expansion of key events and characters; some details just listed
- more general than specific details
- some evidence of organization/sequencing
- some awkwardness may be present

Score Point: 2

Undeveloped narratives; usually brief responses, details just listed
- mostly general details
- may be disorganized/weak sequencing
- may be awkward and confused

Score Point: 1

Very sparse narratives
- may have few/vague details
- too brief to indicate sequencing
- awkward and confused

"Lack Of Vision Makes The Vision Product No Ambition"

BY JELANI HARPER

SIGHT is a gift that nearly all of us are blessed enough to come into this world with, and from day one it makes up an essential part of our lives. Being that it is one of the five primary senses , seeing can be thought of as instinctive, something that we all tend to do as baby's until we reach old age. Seeing comes natural to us, we all can do it, yet why is it that we don't all see the same things? Certainly no matter what it is labeled, reality is the same around all of us, we see the same things. A tree is a tree no matter if we call it a book; that long thick wooden structure with the brittle bark and the green leafy sprouts can be seen by all of us. But time and time again there are certain things that some of us can see, and things that others of us don't see. The reason has to be that the reality we face, that we live is not the same for everybody, so there are certain things some of us see and there are certain things others of us cannot see.

The primary reason for this is, because like speed, seeing is relative. Very literally, you can only see what is in the scope of your vision, whether that is perceived through eyesight or the mind's eye. Visions can be shared, but they don't have to be. This aspect makes the comprehension of the term difficult, because you cannot possibly understand or see something if it is not there for you to see it. Again, seeing is used in the broader sense of the word, meaning seeing from what your literal eyesight provides to what you can actually picture in your mind. We visualize through two ways, through the means experience provides for us and through the illusionary substance of imagination. The former has a greater capacity to be shared by people, because people can share experiences they can share the visions behind them or even ahead of them. But the latter is more difficult to be shared or even comprehended by others, because imagination exists solely within a person, a person is unique, so therefore his imagination and the visions it yields are as well. Experience is external while imagination is internal; both of them can be shared but the internal must be brought out to other people which is not always easy.

So then why do we see what we see? Or better yet, why can some of us see things that others of us can't see? To a certain extent, all of our senses can be rolled into one as sight. What we perceive through listening, smelling, touching is all perception, and often perception can be confused with seeing. Our perception is all we know, so what we see is what we know. Therefore all we know is what we see. If you grow up seeing, perceiving nothing but goodness around you, you are going to grow up thinking that the world is made up of nothing but goodness. That will be your reality because that will be all you will see. That's all you will know, and no one could tell you any different. But the scary thing is that experience can limit your imagination, and you can start to know things because of what you see. Your imagination will then become warped by that reality, and will only be able to visualize certain extensions of it.

All of this combines for limited sight, limited hope, and limited expectations for yourself. All across our nation, little boys are growing with limited hopes for themselves and their future. Whereas the ideal situation is that children can grow up to do whatever they want to do, some children believe they can only be certain things. Instead of considering the possibilities of being a judge or a surgeon, some children can only picture themselves to grow to be a gardener or a car mechanic. And that is the extent of their imagination, of what they can visualize, because that is what is reflected in their experiences. Some children only see adults as car washers, grocery store workers, or bus drivers so that in turn is all they can see for themselves. Noted Vibe staff writer Kevin Powell illustrates this point nicely in his piece on Snoop Doggy Dogg, noted rapper and writer in his own right, when he writes: "If he could do it again Snoop said he might consider jr. College even, unaware that that option in it's own shows the limitations of a black boy's imagination."

"What happens to a dream deferred?" Langston Hughes once wondered in his poem aptly titled Dream Deferred. This is a question worthy of explanation and thought in it's own right, but in this piece why does a dream get deferred takes precedence over the former. Black people, with a particular emphasis on their children, are not realizing the full potential of their existence, which hypothetically contains the same potential as any other human being in the country. That's what our constitution tells us, and I'm sure the President would agree in half a

breath. But the reason we don't realize our potentials is because so many dreams of Black people (hopes, aspirations, goals) have been turned aside or deferred for so long that too few of us even bother to dream any more. Black people don't see anymore, cannot look into the future or even into the past far enough to see to help the whole condition of our race. The extent of most of our people's sight is to make it out of our present monetary and living conditions, usually by playing sports or singing a song, doing the same for our mothers and then to live out the rest of our lives blind,refusing to see that this is just one stroke, indeed the first stroke, of the whole picture. "Lack of vision makes the vision product no ambition."

"Does it shrivel up like a raisin in the sun..." Hughes wondered in his poem long ago. When you can't see past your immediate present, into the comfort of a secure future for you and your people, you in effect have stopped seeing. That's like playing soccer looking only at the ball, running and dribbling it with your head straight down. When you do this one of two things is destined to happen: you will crash into the opposition's legs or run completely out of the boundaries of the field, all the while completely missing what all the other players, indeed the very movement of the game is doing. And in life that is exactly what is happening to our Black people. They are prone to get tripped up by run ins with the law, rightfully considered the opposition because police don't like us, or they run themselves completely out of the game, out of the boundaries of successful life, all the while not seeing what type of other moves people are making around them.

But by no means are we the only people on this earth. While this type of non seeing is not exclusive to our people, indeed there are other races who need to take a look around as well, there are also people who use their vision to full capacity, to benefit their race and their family. Can't other people see the blindness, the plight of Black people? The condition of our people as a whole certainly shows itself enough, with the many television parodies and movies poking fun and ultimately capitalizing on our stories. Ignorance is not the excuse for our condition recurring.

Rapper Dres of Black Sheep posed this question in his song"Black with no N.V." (pronounced as envy): "Now I wonder/Can others see the sights that my eyes see/Or do they simply say they don't and blame it on society." There are only two reasons other established, powerful people (or races) don't help our condition. The first, as Dres suggests, is that people in a position to help don't see our plight, and with all the evidence of our sorry state this must be due to forced sight. People must be unwilling to see our situation, for whatever reason they choose. And the reason they have chosen this path Dres goes on to say, is that they have consciously decided to not see our condition and lay the blame on this all inclusive term "society." All this explanation does is effectively pass the buck to an intangible, perpetuating the state of our race. Therefore until we see for ourselves that it is time to change our own condition, it will merely continue to perpetuate itself.

"I say n.i.g.g.a.z. (Never Ignorant Getting Goals Accomplished) need to get their mind right" -2pac

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